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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Asad's Speech, Syria/Germany,
Syria/OIC, Israel/Lebanon (8/16)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers today reported President Asad's address at the Fourth General Conference of the Syrian Journalists Union. President Asad delivered what the media described as his strongest attack ever on the Lebanese anti-

Syrian parliamentary majority, Arab governments, Israel and the United States. He leveled sharp criticism at Israel, saying that peace in the Middle East would remain elusive for the foreseeable future. "Their 'New Middle East', based on subjugation and humiliation, and denial of rights and identity, has turned into an illusion," Asad said, in reference to Washington's goal of helping to shape what it calls a new, democratic Middle East. "It is evident after six years of this (US) administration that there is no peace and there will be none in the foreseeable future," he said. Asad added that Israel must return the Arab land it has occupied since 1967, or face more insecurity, delegating the final confrontation with Israel to coming generations. "The Israeli leadership ... is at an historic crossroads. Either it moves toward peace and gives back rights, or faces constant instability until an (Arab) generation comes and puts an end to the issue". The Syrian President said that Lebanon's anti-Syrian parliamentary majority is responsible for Israel's war on Lebanon and accused it of inciting strife in the country by asking Hizbollah to lay down its arms. "Saving the present Israeli government is among the tasks of these (March 14) forces. After the failure of this war, these forces want...to provoke strife in Lebanon by trying to disarm the resistance," Asad added. He said that the March 14 forces "barely waited for the blood to dry before they started speaking of removing the arms of the resistance. But they have failed, and their fall is not far off." "They are the ones who bear responsibility for the war and the destruction," Asad charged in his hard-hitting speech. The Syrian leader, in his first major public address since Israel launched its offensive against Lebanon on July 12, said that America's plan for a "new Middle East" has collapsed after Hezbollah's successes in fighting against Israel. He said the region had changed "because of the achievements of the resistance." Asad also lashed out at Arab regimes, without naming them, who have criticized Hizbollah for kidnapping two Israeli soldiers and

starting the war. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan--all allies of the United States--criticized Hezbollah's actions at the start of the conflict. "We do not ask anyone to fight with us or for us; but he should at least not adopt the enemy's views," Asad said. He accused Israel of using Hezbollah's capture of two soldiers as a pretext for launching its massive assaults, adding that the Jewish state does not want peace. "Peace would involve Israel returning occupied lands to their owners and restoring their rights," he said. "The peace process has failed. It has failed since its inception," he said.

Papers also featured a statement by the Syrian Foreign Ministry that German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's visit to Damascus, which was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, was canceled at his request because of divergent views between the two sides on the assessment of Security Council Resolution 1701 and its repercussions on Lebanon, and on the current developments in the region, especially in Lebanon, as a result of the Israeli aggression on it.

Papers also reported that President Asad reviewed the situation in the region with a delegation from the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) headed by Malaysian Foreign Minister Hamed al-Bar. Discussion also focused on UNSC Resolution 1701, regarding the cessation of aggressive actions in South Lebanon and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Lebanese territories beyond the blue line. Talks during the meeting also dealt with ramifications of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon and means of supporting Lebanon, as well as the OIC role in solving issues of the region.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad addresses the Fourth Conference of the Journalists Union: We have to transform military victory of the resistance into political victory. The May 17th team has failed to undermine the resistance. The aggression was a defeat for Israel and its allies. The US and Israel don't seek peace" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/16)
"Information Minister Bilal: President Asad represented the impulse of the Arab street and expressed the dignity of the Arab people" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/16)

"President Asad reviews repercussions of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and means of supporting Lebanon with an OIC delegation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/16)

"Foreign Ministry source: Cancellation of the visit of German Foreign Minister Mr. Steinmeier was due to different points of view regarding the assessment of UNSC Resolution 1701. Foreign Minister Mouallem discusses the situation in Lebanon and the necessity of establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the region with the Norwegian Foreign Minister." (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/16)

"A US report unveils Israeli losses in the war against Lebanon: 343 Israelis were killed, 617 injured and 164 Merkava tanks destroyed. American pilots participated in the war" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/16)

"New US troops dispatched to Iraq. Scores of fatalities and injuries during various attacks in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/16)

"More than 8 Palestinians injured during an Israeli assault against Gaza" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 8/16)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Don't Try to Hide Victory"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/16): "Although the terrorist Israeli aggression against Lebanon has stopped, there is nothing on the ground to suggest that the occupation of Lebanese territories has ended or that the Israeli-American conspiracy against Lebanon has stopped...."

"Lebanon offered many martyrs in the war; the real compensation for these martyrs will be that the victory of the national resistance over the enemy of Lebanon and the nation not be wasted...."

"The enemy was forced to stop the fight as a result of the heavy losses that its forces and settlements suffered. It did not stop until an American-international effort to defeat Lebanon from within began, as it was impossible to defeat it militarily. Hence, it can be said that those who try to hide the glow of the Resistance victory help implement what suits Israel, especially since Resolution 1701 absolved it of the consequences of the aggression on Lebanon...."

"Post-Aggression Address"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/16): "Some Lebanese continue to adopt the same hostile approach toward Hizbollah, despite the party's steadfastness, confrontation, and heroism that inflicted a military and political defeat on Israel and the United States and established new facts in the region...."

"What happened calls for a new Lebanese political discourse and a new Arab political and media address. It is inconceivable and unfair to continue with the wretched old discourse that is based on ready and impotent arguments like 'the eye cannot resist the awl' and 'we must bow to the storm.' And it is inconceivable that we today find a team seeking -- in order to serve its own interests and in implementation of the will of others -- to stab the Resistance in the back after it achieved victory for Lebanon and the Arabs. Perhaps this is the first time in the history of wars and nations that the victor is asked to raise the white flag and lay down the weapon that protected Lebanon from treacherous aggression and from serious colonial plans...."

"Last Minute Bets"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (8/16): "The Israeli army suffered a military defeat that will leave its impact on the position of the Israeli government, as voices have begun to rise, demanding investigations into both the political and military performance...."

"There is confusion and blunder in the Israeli positions and attempts to find excuses to cover the failure.... The frenzied political attempts that some international parties are making to turn the whole situation to Israel's favor will fail, just as the military action failed, despite the covert scenarios and plans to conclude a deal here and a semi-agreement there...."

"Some people are playing roles that converge with the desire of known international parties to steal the victory that the Resistance achieved. These people do not realize that the victory that the blood and heroism of the Resistance fighters achieved will remain too strong to be harmed."

"Leave Us Alone"

As'ad Abbud, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/16): "Hizbollah's victory showed the Arab peoples the huge potential they have and their ability to defeat Israel and regain their rights. But what prevents Arabs from doing this is the official Arab order, which is distancing our potential from the battle, and offering cover for the aggression...."

"The Arab order deceived us for long years and showed us as backward peoples with limited resources, qualified only for bargaining and surrender, not for combat and confrontation...."

"Arab peoples must unleash their potential in the long confrontation, where their first adversary will be the official Arab order itself...."

"A New Middle East in Arab Eyes"

Dr. Faysal Kulthum, Head of the Strategic Studies and Research Center, wrote in Al-Ba'th (8/16): "The war against Lebanon was part of an Israeli-Western plan prepared in advance to create a new Middle East against the will of the peoples of the region...."

There is a conflict between two visions: The American-Western-Israeli vision and that of its allies and followers from among the Arab regimes, on the one hand, and the vision of the Arab and Islamic peoples, whose identity and future are targeted, including the resistance movements in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq and the countries that have chosen resistance, such as

Syria, Iran, and some Arab countries, in addition to the free peoples of the world, on the other.... The Israeli campaign against Lebanon has failed.... A new Middle East is indeed being born, but it is the Middle East that the peoples of the region, not the Americans, wish to see...."
Corbin